

BELLEVUE NETWORK ON AGING
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES

October 8, 2009
8:30 a.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Room 1E -120

MEMBERS PRESENT: Lynne Robinson, Eileen Rasnack, Berta Seltzer, Diana Thompson, Howard Katz, Jullie Gray, Bill Merriman, Bob Megargel, Hannah Kimball

MEMBERS ABSENT: Dwayne Dilley, Heidi Ressler,

STAFF PRESENT: Cathy VonWald, Camron Parker, Cynthia Sessoms, Department of Parks and Community Services

OTHERS PRESENT: Councilmember Conrad Lee; Polly Nelson, Hopelink; Janet Zielasko; Bob Baker, Betsy (Surrey Downs HOA)

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

WELCOME AND ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 8:34 a.m. by Chair Robinson who presided. All committee members were present with the exception of Dwayne Dilley.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. September 3, 2009

Ms. Thompson called attention to the second page of the minutes and noted that "Initiative 1035" should be changed to read "Initiative 1033." She also suggested that the word "visitability" in the last paragraph on the fourth page of the minutes should read "accessibility."

Motion to approve the minutes as amended was made by Mr. Katz. Second was by Mr. Megargel and the motion carried unanimously.

PRESENTATION

A. Special Needs Transportation

Ms. VonWald introduced Polly Nelson, Mobility Program Manager for Hopelink, and noted that Ms. Nelson also serves as the staff liaison to the Eastside Easy Rider Collaborative.

Ms. Nelson said the Eastside Easy Rider Collaborative was formed in 2005 after a group of local people attended a community event focused on transportation issues. The group formulated a mission statement to address the mobility needs of transportation disadvantaged individuals on the Eastside. The list of participants on the Collaborative include the Network, the Seattle/King County Area Agency on Aging, King County Metro, Sound Transit, the City of Bellevue, Hopelink, the City of Kirkland, Overlake Hospital, and United Way.

Ms. Nelson said the draft of the 2009 Human Services Needs Update lists barriers to transportation as the top concern. She said United Way recently profiled the importance of transportation, and the topic was heralded as very important in the Bellevue Transit Study. Hopelink has been seeing increased requests for special needs transportation; both King County Metro and Sound Transit have given grants, and both see a need to supplement what they are doing to better address the need.

Ms. Nelson said she works directly with the Bus Buddy program that provides one-on-one and group training to teach people how to ride the bus. The Travel Ambassador program teaches social service agency professionals and their senior volunteers about transit options in the area. Funding to get the Dial A Ride program started has been received; the program will utilize a shuttle to help individuals get to fixed route locations. She said she has served as the mobility coordinator since June.

Two community conversations are scheduled to gain input from seniors with regard to their transportation needs. The first one will be October 16 at the North Bellevue Community Center, and the second will be on November 19 at Crossroads Community Center with agency staff and the mobility managers from Pierce and Snohomish counties, as well as others. The information gathered will be provided to the King County special needs steering committee to be used in updating its coordinated plan.

Ms. Nelson said she had a table at the Bellevue Farmers Market senior day and had opportunity to talk with a number of people. She said she has also been meeting with assisted living providers to talk about bringing more people into the Collaborative. A presentation is planned for the Eastside Human Services Forum, and comments have been drafted for inclusion in the Puget Sound Regional Council's draft environmental impact statement on the Transportation 2040 plan.

The Bus Buddy one-on-one training is available in 17 different languages. A group training session was recently conducted for over 100 people who were speaking Laotian, Min and Hmong; two translators assisted in that session. About 20 from the group participated in taking a trip to the zoo and back.

The Travel Ambassador program partners with various organizations. Recently a training session was conducted for King County Public Health community volunteer health workers; that presentation was translated into Spanish. Program ideas have been shared with area mobility managers.

Discussions are under way to create a website for the Eastside Easy Rider Collaborative where people can go to find out about the Collaborative and transportation options.

Mr. Katz asked if the King County budget cutbacks will impact the Collaborative. Ms. Nelson said the only impact to transportation services thus far resulted when funding for adult day health was eliminated. Because of the cut, Hopelink was forced to let five staffers go in July and to sever relationships with several transportation brokerages; those organizations were then forced to cut back on their staff and mothball some of their fleets. The recent court ruling that DSHS must provide transportation has triggered talks about how to provide the services in the face of the realization that the program may once again disappear at the end of the year.

Mr. Baker asked if Senior Services is involved in the Collaborative, and Ms. Nelson said they are not directly involved but works with the Collaborative on many different issues. Ms. VonWald said the Senior Services has been invited to the table but has not chosen to attend the meetings. She allowed that Senior Services fills a critical role in providing transportation

services for seniors. Mr. Baker said he is a volunteer driver for Senior Services and would encourage the organization to team up with the Collaborative.

Ms. VonWald said the meeting on October 16 will include Tracy Carroll, one of the founders of the FlexCar program, who has some ideas about older adult transportation and transportation for folks with special needs. She noted that Mr. Carroll was contacted at the urging of Councilmember Lee.

Councilmember Lee stressed the importance of transportation mobility for all citizens. He said Mr. Carroll is putting some entrepreneurial effort into developing his ideas.

Ms. Thompson asked what type of appointments the Dial A Ride program will take people to and how far it will take them. Ms. Nelson said the program is envisioned to take riders to where they can access a regular fixed route. Funding for the program has been received but the program is not operational yet. It could be that the shuttle will take people directly to appointments if the appointment location is closer than the fixed route drop-off point. The program will serve people who are not qualified for the Access program and as such will not be in competition with Access.

Councilmember Lee asked how the Collaboration conducts outreach to non-English speaking communities. Ms. Nelson said she has been working closely with agencies that focus on various refugee and immigrant groups. Within the volunteer group, there are 17 different languages represented, though the interpretive services arm of Hopelink has access to more than 25 languages.

B. City of Bellevue Parks and Recreation Plan Visioning

Camron Parker with the Department of Parks and Community Services said the Parks and Open Space System Plan was last updated in 2003 and scheduled to be updated every six years. He said the plan focuses on the parks side of Parks and Community Services, specifically the park system and the facilities in the park system. A separate plan covers recreational programming within the park system.

Mr. Parker said the plan must be regularly updated for a number of reasons, not the least of which is the desire to maintain accreditation standards. The state, one of the key sources of grants used to expand and develop the park system, also requires long-range plans to be updated regularly.

The current plan has capital recommendations for acquiring new park land and improving existing park facilities. It includes a number of different focus areas, including open space, the trail system, waterfront access, large community parks, small neighborhood parks, the downtown, and recreation facilities. The plan includes a discussion about the North Bellevue Community Center and statements around providing facilities for older adult programming.

One of the key tools for updating the plan is a public opinion survey that was conducted in September. The results will be delivered to the city before the end of October. There was a very high response to the survey on the part of older adults. In addition to the statistically valid random sample survey, an open community web-based survey will be posted within the next week or so.

Mr. Parker said the 2003 plan included a recommendation to expand the North Bellevue Community Center to include additional features. That has not, however, happened. One question to answer is whether or not there is still a need to go in that direction. The plan also includes the suggestion to provide for specialized programming in smaller facilities spread out

across the city, and the notion of developing a community center in the downtown area, neither of which has been achieved.

The updated plan will include more of a focus on access to parks by walking.

Ms. Gray indicated her support for having services more spread out across the city. She commented that people tend to stay in their own areas and could benefit from having services available to them nearby.

Ms. Rasnack agreed but suggested that providing services by neighborhood would be more problematic given that more buildings and more sites would be required. Ms. VonWald agreed that the city would not be able to add the facilities or staffing needed to duplicate the core services, but it could step up its efforts to let everyone know where they can access services as close to their homes as possible.

Mr. Katz said the North Bellevue Community Center where the core services for seniors are offered is for all intents and purposes in Redmond; it is not easy to get to for seniors who live in the south end of the city. The city desperately needs an additional facility to better serve the south-end residents. He added that the more active seniors do not come to the senior center seeking services or activities; they are out in the community doing their thing.

Ms. Thompson asked if the call for a community center in the downtown is to better serve seniors in that area or the entire community. Mr. Parker said the 2003 plan does not call out the North Bellevue Community Center as a senior center, and the plan envisions the same thing for a downtown community center. Ms. VonWald added that during the day when most are working or in school, the community center is able to serve the senior population; in the evening hours the programming is expanded to include non-seniors.

Ms. Thompson said prior to developing a new community center in the city there should be a concerted effort to determine where most of the seniors live. She said a community center in the downtown may not be attractive to seniors if they have to drive the congested streets to get there. The only seniors who will be able to live in the downtown will be those who are financially well off, and that is not necessarily the population that frequents senior centers.

Ms. Seltzer agreed and pointed out that most of the high-end apartment and condo complexes in the downtown have their own workout facilities and pools.

Chair Robinson said one thing she would like to see in the downtown is sufficiently long crosswalk signals to allow seniors the time they need to cross the streets. She said she would favor having a community center in the downtown, especially near the library.

Mr. Merriman agreed that decentralizing activities and services is a good idea on its face but would be problematic to implement. He also agreed with the need to have a community center in the downtown. He asked what is going on with the Surrey Downs site and was told by Mr. Parker that there is space for a building there but no recommendation for anything yet.

Councilmember Lee said the devil is always in the details. The ideas are all good but there will need to be criteria established. He said his recollection was that when the South Bellevue Community Center was developed the intent was to have it serve as a senior center primarily. During the siting, developing and programming phases, however, it turned into a general community center. If a center is developed in the downtown, even if it is another general community center, there will need to be a strong senior element. The downtown area is becoming a very big neighborhood and it deserves a community center.

Ms. Kimball also voiced support for decentralizing services, though the emphasis during the implementation phase should be on utilizing existing facilities. Facilities as they are developed should not focus their services and programs on specific age groups though; that only leads to segregation by age and a sense of isolation.

From the audience, Janet Zielasko said she is new to Bellevue and recently accepted a position at Northshore Senior Center where there is a wonderful level of energy and sense of pride on the part of the seniors who use the facility. The seniors have a sense of ownership and feel valued for who they are.

Also from the audience, Betsy, president of the Surrey Downs Community Club, said the group is nearly ready to put forward a proposal for the Surrey Downs Park that will include a small community-oriented center that would consider the new constituency of the downtown. The proposal will not include a recommendation to partner with an organization such as the Bellevue Boys & Girls Club, but will include a list of possible partners. The facility should not have a senior-centric vision.

BREAK

BNOA MAINTENANCE

- A. PR/Outreach
 - Update
 - Plans for Future Outreach for BNOA

Mr. Megargel said the Farmers Market Senior Day event went very well. There were some 15 booths for non-profit agencies and about 1250 people attended. The market organizer indicated she would be happy to host the event again.

Ms. VonWald informed the Network that the city would be co-sponsoring the Arthritis Walk on October 10. The walk begins at City Hall and a table with Network information will be set up in the lobby.

Ms. VonWald said the fair Home Is Where The Heart Is put on by Overlake Hospital is set for October 17 at Westminster Chapel from 9:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. She called for volunteers to staff the Network table. She said she was able to get the table at no cost. The Kirkland Senior Council will not be attending the event.

- Regional Partnerships/Legislative Issues

Ms. VonWald commented that Mr. Katz and Ms. Thompson have been working on the joint committee with the Kirkland Senior Council to plan the legislative meet and greet. All the legislators from the 41st, 45th and 48th districts have been invited, and most have indicated they will attend. The event will happen on November 9 from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. at the Kirkland Heritage Hall. There will be a social time and an opportunity to introduce the Kirkland Senior Council and the Network on Aging and review the list of legislative priorities. The legislators will be allowed time to ask questions and offer comments. A sponsor has been found to provide snacks and refreshments.

Ms. Kimball asked if the legislative priorities to be outlined must be guided by what the city's legislative priorities are. Ms. VonWald explained that the joint committee is

getting advice from the Washington State Senior Lobby and from Aging and Disability Services. There is no requirement to mirror the city's legislative priorities.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

- Advocacy/Housing & Mobility

Ms. VonWald said the committee met with Arthur Sullivan from ARCH and Janet Lewine from the Department of Planning and Community Development to go over the November Network presentation. It was a very productive meeting.

Ms. VonWald said the group will be meeting October 26 with Eve Stern from Snap for Seniors. They will be discussing expanding their website to include independent living, affordable housing and market rate housing for seniors.

Chair Robinson said she was recently visiting the Bay area and found at a medical supply store a small catalog listing senior housing units. The catalog is updated quarterly and widely distributed, and there is a version available in Seattle as well. She suggested trying to get the company to include the Eastside in its next publication, or using the catalog as a template for producing a similar document.

Ms. VonWald said Mr. Dilley and Ms. Seltzer are continuing to work with the Eastside Easy Rider Collaborative with Tracy Carroll on the upcoming community conversation.

- Education/Safety & Support

Ms. Thompson said as a member of the AARP Legislative Advocacy Committee she receives notices for a variety of activities. She said the group is actively involved with the No on 1033 campaign along with the Senior Lobby. The King County Municipal League has a list of pros and cons listed on its website.

Ms. Thompson informed the Network that in June 2009 the United States Supreme Court in a 5-4 decision changed the standard for proving age discrimination. As a consequence, it is much more difficult to prove age and other discrimination cases. A bill has been introduced in the Congress to change the standard back to what it was previously.

There is also a bill pending before Congress that would give seniors an increase of \$250 in their Social Security allocation. The bill has the support of AARP.

The healthcare debate continues in Congress. Ms. Thompson said the purchasing of prescription drugs from Canada is not in any of the major healthcare bills, but a separate bill will be introduced that will address the issue.

Ms. Thompson praised Mr. Megargel for the job he did in organizing the fair. She said the number of visitors to the booth was quite high, and several were interested in the Vial

of Life program. She said having an ad in publication helped to bring seniors out to the event.

STAFF REPORT

Ms. VonWald reported that the nominating committee met to discuss the six applications received for the Network positions. She said the committee would be meeting again following the Network meeting to talk about moving forward with interviews. The committee will have a recommendation for the full Network to consider at the November 5 meeting. According to the by-laws, the nominating committee is also charged with developing a recommendation for chair and vice-chair.

Mr. Katz suggested that a review of the by-laws by the Network at the annual retreat in January would be a good idea.

NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Gray reminded the Network about the elder abuse conference slated for October 19 and 20 at Meydenbauer Center. She said she would be attending.

Mr. Katz reported that he had a conversation recently with state attorney general Rob McKenna who indicated a willingness to meet with the Network sometime in 2010.

Chair Robinson praised the Network for keeping focused and relevant in all of its work. She said the feedback she has received from people in the community has been very positive; people want to hear what the Network has to say.

Ms. Thompson reported that she and Ms. Rasnack offered testimony at the King County Council budget hearing on October 7.

PUBLIC COMMENTS/QUESTIONS

Mr. Baker informed the Network that Mr. Katz is a real advocate for the organization. He said at a recent informal gathering of friends Mr. Katz shared information about the budget shortfalls and the need for volunteers to help fill the gaps. He said he and Mr. Katz met with Ms. VonWald who put them in touch with the elder care facility and Jubilee Reach who offered a list of specific needs.

UPCOMING AGENDA ITEMS

The Network reviewed the list of upcoming agenda items.

ADJOURN

Chair Robinson adjourned the meeting at 10:22 a.m.